

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-14 INR-09 NSC-10 CIAE-00 RSC-01

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P 092230 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4725

C O N F I D E N T I A L L I M A 1 5 3 3

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VELASCO'S HEALTH

PLEASE INFORM FRECHETTE ARA/ EP

1. RUMORS ABOUNDED LAST NIGHT THAT PRESIDENT VELASCO WAS ABOUT TO BE SENT BY HOSPITAL PLANE TO THE U. S. FOR FURTHER TREATMENT. ALL I COULD SAY WAS THAT WE HAD NO REQUEST FOR VISAS OR ASSISTANCE FOR ARRANGING FOR MEDICAL CARE. THIS SYMPTOMATIC OF A GROWING APPRECIATION OF THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT VELASCO IS NOT RECOVERING FROM HIS SURGERY IN THE MANNER ORIGINALLY HOPED FOR BY THE ATTENDING DOCTORS. IN ADDITION TO THE INFORMATION WHICH REPORTEDLY CAME FROM THE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER (LIMA 1451), THERE HAVE BEEN FURTHER SECOND- HAND BUT REASONABLY AUTHORITATIVE REPORTS FROM AMBASSADORS WHO HAVE BEEN HERE ATTENDING THE PERUVIAN AMBASSADORS CONFERENCE, THE MAYOR OF LIMA, AND PERHAPS MOST AUTHORITATIVE OF ALL, PRIME MINISTER MERCADO AND HIS COMMENTS TO ME ON MARCH 8.

2. AT BEST, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE PRESIDENT'S RIGHT LEG SUFFERS FROM A SERIOUS DEFICIENCY IN CIRCULATION (THIS DIRECT FROM MERCADO). AT WORST, HE IS SEMI- CONSCIOUS SUFFERING FROM LOSS OF MEMORY AND LACK OF COHERENCE IN SPEECH.

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THE CONSENSUS NOW IS THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF HIS RETAINING THE PRESIDENTIAL MANTLE EVEN AS A PROPPED UP FIGUREHEAD. SO THE QUESTION BEFORE HIS REVOLUTIONARY COLLEAGUES IS ACTUALLY NOW ONE OF DECIDING WHO WILL ASSUME THIS POSITION.

3. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE RUMORS OF HIS IMMINENT MEDICAL EVACUATION TO EITHER THAT THE U. S. OR EUROPE ARE BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT THIS COULD PROVIDE A TRANSITION PERIOD DURING WHICH PERU WOULD BE RULED BY A JUNTA PENDING A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF PERSONAL SUCCESSION. HOWEVER, IT WOULD SEEM FROM ALL THE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE THAT THE CONTENDING FORCES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE LUXURY OF TIME THAT THE EVACUATION WOULD PROVIDE. IT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MOVE THE PATIENT AND THEREFORE THE DECISION WILL HAVE TO BE REACHED WHILE HE IS STILL AROUND.

4. THERE IS APPARENTLY NO DIVISION OF OPINION AS TO THE MEMBERSHIP IN THE TWO CAMPS OF THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS. MERCADO JARRIN, CAVERO CALIXTO, AND VARGAS CABALLERO ARE ACCEPTED AS THE LEADING FORCES IN THE FORMER GROUP, AND GRAHAM HURTADO, FERNANDEZ MALDONADO, RODRIGUEZ FIGUEROA, AND HOYOS OF THE ARMORED DIVISION ARE IN THE LATTER. WHILE THE MANEUVERING MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY IS VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE (I WAS KEPT WAITING FOR 20 MINUTES TO SEE MERCADO JARRIN YESTERDAY BECAUSE HE WAS IN A TETE- A- TETE CONFERENCE WITH CAVERO CALIXTO), THINGS HAVE GOT EVEN TO THE STAGE WHERE SOME PEOPLE ARE SUGGESTING THAT MONTAGNE WOULD BE BROUGHT BACK AS A " COMPROMISE SOLUTION," BUT IN OUR OPINION THIS IS EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL. OUR MONEY IS STILL ON SOME COMBINATION OF THE MERCADO- CAVERO FORCES.
BELCHER

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